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[US Department of the Interior News Briefing](#)



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DOI In The News

California Says It Will Ban Crude From Trump Offshore Drilling Plan.

The [Reuters](#) (2/7, Bernstein) reports California announced that it "will block the transport of petroleum from new offshore oil rigs through its state," in what is described as "a move meant to hobble the Trump administration's effort to vastly expand drilling in US federal waters." On Wednesday, the California State Lands Commission sent a letter to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management that urged the withdrawal of the administration's proposal to expand offshore drilling. The letter stated, "It is certain that the state would not approve new pipelines or allow use of existing pipelines to transport oil from new leases onshore." California Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsome (D), who chairs the State Lands Commission, said, "I am resolved that not a single drop from Trump's new oil plan ever makes landfall in California." In response, a spokesperson for Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said, "Secretary Zinke looks forward to meeting with more Governors and other coastal representatives who want to discuss the draft program."

The [Washington Times](#) (2/7, Wolfgang) reports Lt. Gov Newsom's "harsh statement" risked igniting "a legal standoff between California and President Trump." The [Daily Caller](#) (2/7, White) reports California's move "could set it on a collision course with the Trump administration." California "has control over the first three miles west from the coast, and the federally owned Outer Continental Shelf includes waters up to three miles out from that line. California officials can therefore control pipelines, transportation of materials, terminals, and refineries built in coastal areas. The federal government could pull out the U.S. Constitution's supremacy clause to create a regulatory framework that would override California law."

The [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (2/7, Gutierrez) reports the California State Lands Commission letter comes in advance of a public hearing in Sacramento scheduled for Thursday during which the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management will "take public comment on Trump's offshore drilling plans." Hundreds of protesters "are expected to flood the...meeting...with state lawmakers scheduling rallies outside the Capitol and environmental groups busing people from across the state to attend." The [AP](#) (2/8, Cooper) reports that "fishermen, environmentalists and other critics plan to protest at the California Capitol before a public hearing on federal government plans to expand offshore drilling."

The [AP](#) (2/8) reports the BOEM will also hold public hearings on the proposed offshore drilling plan in Concord, New Hampshire on March 5 and in August, Maine on March 7.

Additional coverage was provided by the [AP](#) (2/7, COOPER), [NPR](#) (2/8, Sommer), the [Washington Examiner](#) (2/7, Siciliano), the [Ventura County \(CA\) Star](#) (2/7, Vaughan), the [San Luis Obispo \(CA\) Tribune](#) (2/7, Vaughan), the [Independent \(UK\)](#) (2/7, Francisco), and [KQED-FM San Francisco](#) (2/7, Miller)..

Coastal Senators Decry ‘Dumb’ Proposal, Plot Response. [E&E Daily](#) (2/7, Lunney) reports Democratic senators from US coastal states “added their fierce opposition yesterday to the Interior Department’s proposed plan to open up more than 90 percent of federal waters to oil and gas drilling.” Eleven lawmakers, led by Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), “took to the Senate floor yesterday to decry potential offshore drilling in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.” The senators used a wide-ranging vocabulary to describe the proposal, including: “egregious,” ‘dumb,’ ‘disastrous,’ ‘insane’ and ‘misguided.’” Cantwell was joined by Sens. Tom Carper (D-DE), Chris Coons (D-DE), Patty Murray (D-WA), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Angus King (I-ME) and Ed Markey (D-MA). Additional coverage was provided by [UPI](#) (2/7, Graeber).

New Jersey Environmentalists Blast Trump Offshore Drill Plan. The [AP](#) (2/7, Parry) reports more than a dozen New Jersey environmental groups “held a rally in the driving rain Wednesday on the Asbury Park boulevard” protesting “President Donald Trump’s plan to open most of the nation’s coastline to drilling.” New Jersey Sierra Club director Jeff Tittel said, “What Trump did was target the oceans from one end of the country to the other. … We are going to send a very clear message to the fossil fool in the White House: hands off our beaches.”

The [NJTVA Trenton \(NJ\)](#) (2/7, Aron) reports that “the entire New Jersey congressional delegation has written to” to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to oppose the proposed offshore drilling plan. On Tuesday, New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez registered his opposition on the Senate floor, while Rep. Chris Smith’s office warned of the potential risks of an offshore oil spill on New Jersey beaches, wildlife, businesses, and tourism. Although there is no known oil off the Jersey Shore, the “New Jersey Petroleum Council says there is a large natural gas deposit 100 miles out.” According to NJPC Executive Director Jim Benton: “We are advocates for increasing our energy supply. That’s what we do. We think offshore development plays a critical role in our national energy security. It can be done safely and coexist with tourism and fishing.”

Also reporting is [WHYY-TV Philadelphia](#) Philadelphia (2/7, Gregory).

Gov. Scott Confident Florida Protected From Oil Drilling. The [Tampa Bay \(FL\) Times](#) (2/7, Danielson) Florida Gov. Rick Scott (R) on Wednesday affirmed “his belief that the Trump administration will keep its word and exempt Florida from plans for offshore drilling.” Scott said, “As you know, I’ve opposed offshore drilling, and as soon as Secretary Zinke was confirmed, I met with him, I talked to him about that we didn’t want it off our coast, and then when they came out with their plan – this was right around Christmas – I immediately called and asked if we could meet, and he was gracious enough to come down, and the right thing happened. There’s not going to be offshore drilling. … He’s a man of his word. He’s a Navy Seal and I believe they’re going to do exactly what they committed.”

Pressure Mounting On Georgia Governor To Oppose Offshore Drilling Plan. In its Political Insider blog, the [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (2/7, Bluestein) reports Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal (R) is facing mounting pressure “to oppose the Trump administration’s move to open nearly all of the nation’s coastal waters to offshore oil and gas drilling.” Earlier in the week, the City Council of Atlanta “voted to back a resolution…that would oppose seismic testing and oil and gas development off Georgia’s coasts.” At the same time, “a bipartisan group of state lawmakers…introduced resolutions this week raising concerns it could disrupt the state’s fishing and tourism industries.” Gov. Deal remains “the only governor of a coastal state who has yet to oppose or embrace the plan.”

Udall Testifies On Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks Conservation Act In Key Committee Hearing.

[KRWG-FM](#) Las Cruces, NM (2/7) reports that Sen. Tom Udall on Wednesday testified before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee in “support of his legislation to establish wilderness within the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (OMDP) National Monument.” The Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks Conservation Act, S. 441, which is also cosponsored by Sen. Martin Heinrich, “provides permanent protection for some of Southern New Mexico’s most iconic landscapes, strengthens border security, respects military needs and historic grazing and safeguards OMDP’s sensitive cultural, historical, and natural treasures for generations to come.” Udall said, “Wilderness designation will enhance recreational opportunities in these pristine areas for hiking – as well as preserve traditional hunting and grazing uses and protect sensitive archaeological sites from destruction. National monument status brings important economic benefits as well. And Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks is no exception. From 2015 to 2016, visitors to the monument more than doubled. Increased tourism means increased spending at local restaurants, hotels, outdoor businesses, and arts and crafts shops, leading to an increase in our tax base.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Albuquerque \(NM\) Journal](#) (2/8, Coleman).

Trump And Zinke Open Millions Of Acres Of California Desert To Mining.

The [Palm Springs \(CA\) Desert Sun](#) (2/7, Roth) reports that the Interior Department “said this

week it would allow mining on 1.3 million acres, or more than 2,000 square miles, across the California desert, reversing an Obama-era effort to protect those lands." The move "follows the Trump administration's announcement last week that it would reconsider an Obama-era plan to protect millions of acres of public land in the California desert." The Interior Department "said it hopes to allow more solar and wind farms, off-road vehicle driving, mining and grazing on those lands, which are home to desert tortoises, bighorn sheep, Joshua trees and other iconic species."

Bears Ears Is Open For Mining, But No One Bothered To Show Up.

[Bloomberg News](#) (2/7, Deaux) reports that "a controversial decision weeks earlier by President Donald Trump had shrunk the size of two national monuments – known as Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante – by hundreds of thousands of acres, enraging environmentalists and American Indian groups who feared a stampede of mine and oil wildcatters would rush in and destroy the area's sandstone vistas, historic rock carvings and artifacts." But so far, the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining "says it hasn't received a single permit application for plots in the areas." Although "that may not ease the angst in the activist community any," the article says that "it does highlight a couple of key elements to the dispute: While the remote region contains several minerals as well as oil and gas, the logistics of moving material in and out are tricky, and the only resource that has the real potential of luring explorers is uranium."

After Court Wins, Bundy Camp Launches Legal Offensive Over Public Lands, Oregon Standoff.

The [Washington Times](#) (2/7, Richardson) reports that Cliven Bundy and his associates have "launched a legal offensive against federal and state authorities, filing three civil lawsuits in the last two weeks challenging public-lands policy in Nevada and alleging official misconduct in the 2016 Oregon standoff." According to the Times, Cliven Bundy "wants to resolve his longstanding dispute over grazing rights with the federal government once and for all." The Times also reports that Jeanette Finicum "filed Jan. 25 a wrongful-death lawsuit over the killing of her husband, Robert 'LaVoy' Finicum, a Bundy ally who was shot three times in the back in January 2016 by Oregon state police at an FBI roadblock during the Malheur standoff." The Times says Finicum's case was "bolstered by...the June indictment of FBI agent W. Joseph Astarita for lying about firing his weapon."

Patagonia Finds New Way To Challenge Trump, Aid Activists.

[E&E Publishing](#) (2/7, Doyle) reports that Patagonia is "escalating its political and civic activism with a new program unveiled today that could continue to pit the famed outdoor clothing company against congressional Republicans and the Trump administration's Interior Department." Citing "this time of unprecedented threats," the firm has "set up an online platform called Patagonia Action Works that's billed as a way for people to find environmental nonprofits based on issues and locations." The platform "also provides links for grass-roots organizations to apply for funding."

Connelly: Ex-Interior Secretary – 'No Such Thing As Clean Coal'.

The [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#) (2/8, Connelly) reports that former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell spoke Wednesday at City Club's Civic Cocktail and delivered a "wide-ranging critique of damage being done by the Trump administration." According to Jewell, "the Trump administration has brought fun-house distortion to managing America's public lands, from yanking the welcome mat at national parks to making it harder to develop clean energy sources." Jewell "initially followed a Cabinet tradition of withholding criticism of one's successor, but her silence was broken with the Trump decision to slash by 85 percent the size of newly created Bears Ears National Monument in Utah."

Bureau Of Indian Affairs

Federal Decision On Mashpee Tribe's Land Expected Soon.

The [Cape Cod \(MA\) Times](#) (2/7, Stening) reports that the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe "could be just days away from learning the fate of land the federal government took into trust on its behalf and a casino it wants to build on some of that property." The Interior Department is "set to decide whether the tribe's sovereign land, consisting of 170 acres in Mashpee and 151 acres in East Taunton, can remain in trust after a U.S District Court judge in 2016 adhered to a 2009 Supreme Court ruling in finding that the tribe failed to satisfy the legal definition of 'Indian' under the Indian Reorganization Act." However, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council Chairman Cedric Cromwell "said in a statement that there is no statutory requirement that the Interior Department

issue a decision on a specific date."

Suspect Arrested In Double-Homicide On Nevada Reservation.

The [AP](#) (2/7) reports that "a northern Nevada man has been arrested as a suspect in a double homicide on a tribal reservation along the Nevada-Oregon line." Humboldt County Sheriff Mike Allen "says Stoney Prior of McDermitt originally was taken into custody on unrelated tribal charges the day of the Jan. 31 killings at a home on the Fort McDermitt Reservation about 75 miles north of Winnemucca." According to Allen, "investigators for his office, the FBI and the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs subsequently developed probable cause and charged him with murder."

Bureau Of Land Management

Feds Seek To Drop Charges Against Bundy Defendants.

The [Arizona Republic](#) (2/7, Anglen) reports that federal prosecutors "want to drop charges against the four remaining defendants in the Bundy Ranch standoff case, including two militia members from Arizona." According to the Republic, "attorneys for the Nevada U.S. Attorney's Office filed a motion late Wednesday asking the court to dismiss the case against the men charged with taking up arms against federal agents to prevent a roundup of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy's cattle in 2014." The Republic adds that "the dismissals represent an ignominious end to the case, which blew up last month when a judge declared a mistrial against the primary defendants in the case over what she described as egregious misconduct by prosecutors." US District Judge Gloria Navarro "said federal prosecutors acted recklessly and engaged in a 'deliberate attempt to mislead and distort the truth' by failing to turn over evidence that could have helped exonerate the four defendants."

Additional coverage was provided by the [Washington Times](#) (2/8, Richardson) and [KLAS-TV](#) Las Vegas (2/7, Bowers).

Garfield County Supports Roan-Area Drilling Plan.

The [Glenwood Springs \(CO\) Post Independent](#) (2/7, Zorn) reports that the Garfield County Board of County Commissioners "signed a letter in support of Terra Energy's proposed plan for the Balzac Gulch Phase II project, while noting concerns about visual impacts." In 2015, the Bureau of Land Management "canceled 17 of the 19 natural gas leases on top of the Roan Plateau west of Rifle as part of a settlement negotiated between conservation groups and oil and gas leaseholders," but "numerous other leases at the base of the Roan were allowed to proceed under the deal, including ones now proposed for development by Terra Rocky Mountain." According to BLM spokesman David Boyd, "while the leases Terra currently proposes to develop as part of the Balzac Gulch Phase II Master Development Plan are among those included in that larger settlement, they are located below the rim and not on top of the Roan Plateau."

BLM Extends Comment Period On Southern Nevada Management Plan.

The [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#) (2/7, Brean) reports that the Bureau of Land Management has "extended the public comment period on its effort revise its management blueprint for Southern Nevada." The deadline "to submit input on BLM's draft resource management plan for the area, which is being revised for the first time in 20 years" is now March 23. The comment period was originally set to expire on Feb. 2.

Bureau Of Reclamation

Gov. Jerry Brown Scales Back Delta Tunnels Project.

The [Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#) (2/7, Kasler) reports that "the troubled Delta tunnels project was officially downsized Wednesday, as Gov. Jerry Brown's administration announced it would attempt to build a single tunnel in its effort to re-engineer California's elaborate water-delivery system." Failing "to secure enough money from California's water agencies for the original twin tunnels concept, the California Department of Water Resources said it would now try to build the project in phases: one tunnel now and a second tunnel years down the road." However, "the long-awaited announcement doesn't appear to immediately solve the financial questions looming over the project, known officially as California WaterFix."

Water Forecast Is Bleak For Major Reservoir In Southwest US.

The [AP](#) (2/7, Elliott) reports that Lake Powell will "likely collect less than half its normal amount of spring runoff this year because of a warm, dry winter across much of the region, forecasters said

Wednesday." Lake Powell is "expected to get 47 percent of its average inflow because of scant snow in the mountains that feed the Colorado River, said Greg Smith, a hydrologist with the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration." Smith "said there is only a 10 percent chance that enough mountain snow will fall during the rest of the winter and spring to bring inflows back to average." The article notes that "it was the seventh-worst forecast for Lake Powell in 54 years."

Additional coverage was provided by the [Arizona Daily Star](#) (2/7, Davis).

Fish And Wildlife Service

Rubio And Nelson Call For More Funding To Stop Grasshopper Sparrows From Vanishing.

The [Miami Herald](#) (2/7, Staletovich) reports that Florida Sens. Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson are "sounding the alarm on Florida's nearly extinct grasshopper sparrows." In a letter to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Director Greg Sheehan this week, they "warned that with fewer than 100 birds left on the planet, the agency needs to ensure adequate funding for research." Nelson and Rubio wrote, "While we understand that all agencies face painful budget decisions, the funding needs in question make up less than one percent of the total Recovery Program funding for USFWS proposed by the Senate Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee for the current fiscal year."

House Approves Polquin's Proposal For Swifter Exports Of Maine Seafood.

The [Ripon Advance](#) (2/7) reports that the U.S. House of Representatives on Monday passed a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Bruce Polquin "that aims to limit mandatory inspections and hasten exports of specific types of Maine seafood." The bill would "exempt exporters of sea urchins and sea cucumbers designated as food or taken for recreational purposes from licensing requirements, according to the bill's summary." The bill would also "require the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to amend regulations concerning transporting wildlife to clarify that sea urchins and sea cucumbers are fishery products exempt from the export permission requirements under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, according to the summary."

Endangered Fish Have Re-Emerged In The Santa Cruz River.

[Cronkite News](#) (2/7, Mendoza) reports that "after a 70-year absence, the endangered Gila topminnow has re-emerged in the Santa Cruz River, a sign of health of a historically desiccated river basin." According to ecologists and environmentalists, "the cleaner water today can be attributed to upgrades in local water-treatment plants." Doug Duncan, a fish biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "said more than 1,000 fish can be found in the river today, but things were vastly different before the treatment plant upgrades."

National Park Service

NPS Official Requested Thousands In Upgrades For Park Housing Unit He Planned To Rent Out.

[The Hill](#) (2/7, Green) reports that a National Park Service senior official requested the Interior Department "make \$32,000 worth of design and construction upgrades to an agency-owned housing unit in an attempt to profit from renting out the space as if it were his personal residence, according to an internal report." A DOI Office of Inspector General summary report released Wednesday "found that the unnamed NPS official, who served as liaison for two park partners, had 'created the appearance of using his public office for private gain' when he requested 'unnecessary' upgrades to a park housing unit." The IG "said that at the time that the report was created, on Jan. 8, the senior official had decided not to move into the unit and that NPS had delayed the renovations."

New Quarter Commemorates Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore.

The [AP](#) (2/7) reports that a new quarter commemorates Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. The U.S. Mint and the National Park Service on Wednesday was set to hold an event to launch the "America the Beautiful Quarters Program" coin.

Also reporting are the [Detroit Free Press](#) (2/7, Gray) and [WBUP-TV Marquette \(MI\)](#) Marquette, MI (2/7, Lambert).

Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument Expansion Gains Support.

The [Colorado Springs \(CO\) Gazette](#) (2/7, Ramstack) reports that Teller County commissioner

Norm Steen "told Congress Tuesday that expanding the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument would help prevent wildfires and protect wildlife." Steen said in his testimony, "We received no public opposition to the idea and we unanimously agreed to support the expansion of the Fossil Beds Monument." The National Park Service would "manage the land, including trimming away underbrush that could provide fuel for fires, if Congress authorizes the transfer of ownership."

Sandy Springs Buying Land For Trail To Chattahoochee.

The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (2/7, Ibata) reports that Sandy Springs has "struck a deal with an apartment complex owner to buy a strip of land so the city can construct a trail connecting Crooked Creek Park to a National Park Service parcel along the Chattahoochee River." According to the article, "a pedestrian trail is planned to connect Crooked Creek Park, five acres owned by the city at River Exchange and Spalding drives, to the 40-acre Holcomb Bridge unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area."

New Exhibits, Free Admission At Morristown Washington's Headquarters.

The [Morristown \(NJ\) Daily Record](#) (2/7, Westhoven) reports that Morristown National Historical Park will unveil a new \$2.2 Discover History Center on President's Day Weekend at Washington's Headquarters in Morristown. Park Superintendent Tom Ross "conducted a media preview of the center on Tuesday, demonstrating interactive exhibits that explained, through video, audio, games and other devices, a variety of subjects relevant to the Revolutionary War and multiple winter encampments of Gen. George Washington's Continental Army."

Joshua Tree National Park Sets Another Attendance Record In 2017.

The [Palm Springs \(CA\) Desert Sun](#) (2/7, Barkas) reports that Joshua Tree National Park "set a new attendance record in 2017 with more than 2.8 million visitors – an increase of more than 338,000 over 2016 and the fourth consecutive record-setting year, officials said." Officials added that "they have also seen more people using the park during the week and at off-peak times to avoid long lines of vehicles at the entrance gates." Park Superintendent David Smith said, "We are pleased to see the number of visitors taking our suggestions by visiting during off-peak times, coming during the week and using the entrance at Cottonwood to avoid big weekend crowds."

Malibu Surfing Area Added To National Register Of Historic Places.

The [Santa Monica \(CA\) Mirror](#) (2/7, Novack) reports that "Los Angeles' iconic Malibu surfing area" has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The [Malibu \(CA\) Times](#) (2/7, Patel) reports that "Malibu Historic District includes popular destinations, including the Historic Malibu Pier, Surfrider Beach, Malibu Lagoon State Beach and surf breaks at First, Second and Third Points."

Office Of Insular And International Affairs

Interior Expands Role Of Assistant Insular Affairs Secretary.

The [St. Thomas Source](#) (2/6) reports that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has "signed an order expanding the functions and responsibilities of Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Doug Domenech, adding responsibility for the Office of International Affairs and the Ocean, Great Lakes, and Coastal Program, the U.S. Department of the Interior reported Monday." Those responsibilities are "currently under the assistant secretary for policy management and budget." The new expanded portfolio will now be called the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs. Zinke said, "This realignment is part of the department's overall efforts to reorganize for the next 100 years and improve mission achievement. By elevating the profiles of all three of these components within Interior, we aim to renew and strengthen U.S. strategic interests, strengthen relationships and policies for U.S. oceans, Great Lakes and coastal communities, and enhance collaboration globally on behalf of the American people."

Additional coverage was provided by the [St. Croix Source](#) (2/6).

Lawmakers Scold Trump Official Over Pacific Island Trust Fund.

The [Hill](#) (2/6, Wong) reports that "lawmakers on Tuesday scolded an Interior Department official over a decision to hand over a trust fund to former residents of the Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific." Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski "said Congress had not been notified about the decision before the administration acted." At a committee hearing, Murkowski told Doug Domenech, assistant secretary of insular areas at the Interior Department, "We learned about this letter and this reversal of decades-long practice by way of a press release – which is not a good way to work through the responsibilities that we

have with Congress." Domenech "apologized to Murkowski and the other lawmakers, saying the agency did not know the committee had an 'interest in this particular issue.'" However, "the answer did little to assuage lawmakers."

Additional coverage was provided by the [Washington Post](#) (2/6, Grandoni), the [Anchorage \(AK\) Daily News](#) (2/5, Grandoni), the [Marianas Variety](#) (2/7, Grandoni), and [Courthouse News](#) (2/6, Eakin).

Bill Puts Rule On Islander Adoptees.

The [Arkansas Democrat Gazette](#) (2/6, Thompson) reports that "any adoption of a Marshallese parent's child would require approval by the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands under a bill state Rep. Jeff Williams, R-Springdale, hopes to introduce this month." According to Eldon Alik, consulate general for the Marshall Islands, "passage of the bill would help the Marshallese government's efforts to curb adoptions that take children out of the country and would protect the republic's citizens living in the United States." Alik said his government supports the legislation.

Delinking Tax Code Fails To Gain Support.

The [Guam Daily Post](#) (2/6, Kerrigan) reports that the Guam Tax Commission has decided that "now is not the time to delink from federal tax code." The issue of "delinking was raised in the wake of the tax reform passed by Congress in December, which now threatens the government of Guam with the loss of \$47.9 million in tax revenue this fiscal year and \$66.1 million next year."

Former President Clinton Visits U.S. Virgin Islands.

The [South Florida Caribbean News](#) (2/6) reports that former United States President Bill Clinton visited the U.S. Virgin Islands on Monday. Clinton supported Governor Kenneth E. Mapp's "assertion that rebuilding with added resiliency is the right thing to do in the Territory." Clinton "agreed that hardening the Territory's infrastructure will save both tax dollars and lives."

Shredded Roofs, Shattered Lives.

The [Washington Post](#) (2/6) reports the widespread destruction suffered by the US Virgin Islands after Hurricanes Irma and Maria battered the territory last year. The damage's dampening effect on tourism has threatened the livelihoods of many Virgin Islanders. The Post suggests that the Islands' entire middle class could be bankrupted by repair cost. The Post profiles several Virgin Islanders who face costs higher than \$100,000.

US Geological Survey

Melting Permafrost Could Release Massive Amounts Of Dangerous Mercury, Study Says.

The [Weather Channel](#) (2/7, Wright) reports that "melting permafrost is expected to release massive amounts of dangerous mercury into the environment in the coming years as climate change warms the planet, a new study says." Scientists with the U.S. Geological Survey "discovered the world's largest known store of mercury in the northern Arctic during a nearly 15-year study that entailed the drilling of 13 permafrost soil cores at various Alaskan sites." Study co-author Kevin Schaefer of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado said, "Prior to the start of the study, people assumed permafrost contained little to no mercury. But it turns out that not only is there mercury in permafrost, it's also the biggest pool of mercury on the planet."

Also reporting are the [Daily Mail](#) (2/7, Pettit) and [CBS News](#) (2/7, Specktor).

Magnitude 3.1 Earthquake Shakes North-central Oklahoma.

The [AP](#) (2/7) reports that the US Geological Survey detected a "3.1 magnitude earthquake...at 10:12 a.m. about five miles south of Hennessey in Kingfisher County, about 45 miles (72 kilometers) northwest of Oklahoma City" at a depth of roughly four miles. Oklahoma earthquakes in recent years have been "linked to the underground injection of wastewater from oil and natural gas production."

Opinion Pieces

Trump Has Offered No Valid Reason For Revising California's Desert Plan.

In an editorial, the [Los Angeles Times](#) (2/7) criticizes the move by the Trump Administration to reconsider the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. The paper urges Californians "to

stand firm against this ploy to remove hard-fought protections and to endanger some of the state's defining landscapes." The editorial claims that "ultimately, this move has less to do with renewable energy development than with the Trump administration's desire to significantly reduce the amount of land set aside for conservation, and to undo every vestige of the Obama legacy that it can get its oil-stained hands on."

California Has Opposed Offshore Drilling For Decades, And For Good Reason.

In an op-ed for the [Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#) (2/7, Laird), California secretary for natural resources John Laird opposes the Interior Department's offshore drilling plan. He notes that "no new offshore oil and gas leases have been allowed in California since a 1969 blowout off the coast of Santa Barbara fouled miles of shoreline; killed thousands of birds, fish and sea mammals; and devastated tourism and commercial fishing." Laird asserts that "California's opposition to offshore oil and gas development is neither partisan nor geographic; it is deeply ingrained across the state." In conclusion, he urges the Interior Department "to heed the will of Californians and withdraw our state from further consideration for renewed offshore oil and gas development."

Energy Dominance Takes A Toll On Public Lands, Public Input And Other Industries.

The [Durango \(CO\) Herald](#) (2/7) editorializes that the Trump Administration's "actions in the past year that prioritize the development of fossil fuels to achieve energy dominance are actions that ignore the reality of fossil-fuel-driven climate change that will benefit our economy in the short term while ignoring the long-term impacts." The paper adds that the actions also ignore "the public, who owns these lands." The editorial criticizes the Interior Department's move to scrap leasing plans, which "were created to bridge Washington and the West." It concludes that "scrapping them flies in the face of this administration's interest in 'giving local people back their say in public lands management.'"

Move Would Be Cosmetic.

In an editorial, the [Eugene \(OR\) Register-Guard](#) (2/8) questions the idea of moving the Bureau of Land Management's headquarters to a Western site. The paper points out that "the BLM's employees are already concentrated in the West," while "only 400 employees are at the BLM's headquarters in Washington, D.C." Moreover, "the BLM would still need employees in the capital even if its headquarters" were in the West, since "Washington, D.C., is where top-level consultations with other agencies, ranging from the U.S. Forest Service to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, can occur." And "it's also where Congress sits, and its committees often call upon BLM leaders for testimony."

The Bureau Of Indian Education Is Broken.

In commentary for [Education Week](#) (2/7, Juneau), Denise Juneau, the former state superintendent of public instruction in Montana, writes that while the Bureau of Indian Education "creates plan after plan intended to restructure, realign, reform, redesign, revise, and redo their education system, in actuality these plans are rarely carried out." She argues that "for over a century, the federal government has proven that attempting to control and oversee a nationwide network of schools leads to an ineffective and disheartening system of education that fails to address the cultural, linguistic, and overall learning needs of American Indian children." Juneau advises that "to truly move toward tribal educational sovereignty, the BIE needs to loosen its grip, reduce the bureaucracy, and stop regulating from afar."

Additional Reading.

- *Thompson: The Public Land Sellout.* [Durango \(CO\) Herald](#) (2/7, Thompson).
- *Transmission Line Will Bring Multiple Benefits To Entire Region.* [Idaho Statesman](#) (2/7, Colburn).
- *CA Energy Project Brings Affordable Energy To Valley Farms.* [Fresno \(CA\) Bee](#) (2/7, Michael).
- *Arizona Lawmakers Are Trying To Decimate Your Groundwater (again).* [Arizona Republic](#) (2/7, Ferris).
- *Maybe It's Time For The Seminole Tribe To Make A Deal.* [Florida Politics](#) (2/7, Schorsch).

Top National News

Liberals "Infuriated" Senate Budget Deal Excludes Protections For DREAMers.

Senate Majority Leader McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Schumer on Wednesday announced a bipartisan two-year budget deal that will increase spending on military and domestic

programs but which increases the deficit and leaves the fate of so-called DREAMers unresolved. Media coverage of the agreement, which is extensive, focuses heavily on the opposition of liberal Democrats and immigration activists, describing them as "frustrated" and "infuriated" that protections for the DREAMers were left out of the bill. To a lesser extent, reporting highlights expected opposition from House conservatives, who take issue with the spending increases. While the White House voiced support for the plan, media reports, citing opposition from the left and the right, question whether the measure will have sufficient support to pass the House.

The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, Werner, Debonis) reports the agreement adds "billions of dollars in federal spending." The deal would "lift statutory budget limits by more than \$200 billion and provide tens of billions of dollars in disaster relief funding." The [New York Times](#) (2/7, Kaplan) says the deal would "effectively negate Mr. Trump's demands to broadly reorder government with deep cuts to nondefense programs like environmental protection, foreign aid and health research that were to offset large increases in military spending." The [Los Angeles Times](#) (2/7, Mascaro) says that while the deal "promises to end the shutdown threats that have plagued Congress," it "fails to address the unresolved issue of immigration and will add to a deficit already ballooning from the GOP tax cut plan."

In an editorial, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/7) laments that to secure a much-needed funding increase for the military, Republicans had to agree to Democrats demands for large increases in discretionary spending. Similarly, a [Washington Post](#) (2/7) editorial says that while the deal would "do some good," and Senate leaders "deserve credit for talking to one another and dealing in good faith," it comes "at the cost of more debt, confirming yet again that the only time Washington's leaders appear able to shake hands on big deals is when both sides agree to run up the national tab."

To [Reuters](#) (2/7, Becker), the deal represents "a rare display of bipartisanship," and [Politico](#) (2/7, Everett, Bresnahan) says it is "likely to pass easily" in the Senate, but "House approval will be a tougher lift." The [AP](#) (2/7, Taylor) calls it "a bitter defeat for many liberal Democrats who sought to use the party's leverage on the budget to resolve the plight of immigrant 'Dreamers.'" [USA Today](#) (2/7, Singer) says the omission of protections for the DREAMers "has infuriated House Democrats."

[Townhall](#) (2/7, O'Brien) calls it "surprising" that "Democrats agreed to a deal that does not include DACA," and suggests they may have "learned something from the disastrous government shutdown a few weeks ago that did not sit well with the American people." [Politico](#) (2/7, Schor, Caygle) describes "an internal Democratic rebellion" and says progressives "are frustrated that Senate Democrats cut a budget deal while relief for the young undocumented immigrants known as Dreamers remains in limbo."

Under the headline, "Liberal Outrage As Dems Ignore 'Dreamers' In Budget Deal," the [AP](#) (2/7, Peoples, Lugo) reports that "immigration activists joined liberal leaders Wednesday in threatening political retribution against congressional Democrats who ignore young immigrants in a massive spending deal." [Breitbart](#) (2/7, Starr) reports that during an "anti-Trump Women's March" in Washington Wednesday, "anti-semitic and pro-Palestinian activist Linda Sarsour," a co-founder of the march, called Trump a white supremacist and warned Schumer, "I'm tired of white men negotiating on the backs of people of color and communities like ours. ... We are not bargaining chips. ... This is not a poker game." At the rally, which was billed as "A Day of Action Against Trump's White Supremacy," Sarsour and other speakers "expressed support for amnesty for not only the 800,000 illegal aliens protected from deportation under the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, but all of the estimated 11 million here illegally."

[Bloomberg News](#) (2/7, Litvan, Wasson, Kapur) reports that Rep. Luis Gutierrez said a deal is unacceptable without protections for the DREAMers. Gutierrez told reporters, "That would be a complete betrayal," adding that "a lot" of Democrats agree. Rep. Ted Lieu said on [CNN's Situation Room](#) (2/7) that he will not vote for the Senate deal, arguing that "if they want my vote, then they need to negotiate with us and one of my reasonable requests is a fix to DACA so we don't deport 1.8 million people, and if they don't need my vote, they can pass it by themselves on their own votes."

Sen. Richard Blumenthal said on [CNN's Situation Room](#) (2/7) that while the agreement represents "bipartisan progress," he is "still very concerned that it fails to address the protection of the DREAMers."

Sen. Dick Durbin was asked on [MSNBC's Morning Joe](#) (2/7) about the chances that the DACA deadline will be extended. Durbin said, "The President said he won't extend it. In fact in testimony a member of his cabinet said he could not legally extend it. The President created this deadline. We're now five months into his six-month challenge and the Republican Congress has passed not one bill to address the President's challenge. If this March 5 comes around, we don't have an alternative to the President's shutdown of this program, 1,000 young people a day will lose their protected status under DACA. ... It's a harsh outcome because the President got into this without a proposal, a reasonable proposal to solve the problem he created."

[Breitbart](#) (2/7, Munro) says the plan "effectively blocks the Democrats' push to win a 2018 amnesty for so-called 'dreamer' illegals" because it "leaves the Senate Democrats without any budget leverage to force House Speaker Rep. Paul Ryan to schedule an amnesty debate on the House floor that would split the GOP caucus prior to the November election." The [Washington Times](#) (2/7, Dinan, Sherfinski) says that while the deal "does not include any immigration solutions," McConnell "has promised a robust debate beginning next week." That promise was "not good enough for immigrant-rights groups," who "said they'll try to push for another stoppage." House Minority Leader Pelosi "said she won't support the budget deal unless GOP leaders agree to a free-wheeling immigration debate in the House, similar to the one Mr. McConnell promised in the Senate."

Kasie Hunt reported on [NBC Nightly News](#) (2/7, story 2, 0:55, Guthrie) that Pelosi delivered "a marathon eight-hour" floor speech "protesting [the] major bipartisan budget deal." The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, O'Keefe, Weigel, Kane) reports that Pelosi "peppered her speech with anecdotes about people protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and mentioned the biblical tale of the Good Samaritan."

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (2/7, Wire) says Pelosi "described the children who were smuggled across the border in trash cans" and "spoke of students who gave graduation speeches but weren't able to get loans to follow their classmates to college." In addition, she "recounted the anxiety of Dreamers who lost their work permits after President Trump last year announced the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program," and "demanded" that Ryan "commit to a vote on fixing the legal status of Dreamers in exchange for her support for a two-year spending plan to keep the government open past Thursday night." The [New York Times](#) (2/7, Stolberg) says Pelosi "demonstrated, yet again, why" she "remains one of the most enduring – and to many, infuriating – figures in Washington."

House Conservatives Expected To Oppose Agreement. The deal also faces opposition from House conservatives. Nancy Cordes said in the lead story for the [CBS Evening News](#) (2/7, lead story, 2:35, Glor) that Republican leaders "are facing a conservative uprising," and [Politico](#) (2/7, Bade, Everett, Ferris) says "fiscal hawks" slammed it "as fiscally irresponsible and an abrogation of the GOP's congressional majorities." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/7, Peterson, Hughes) reports that House conservatives oppose the bill's increased spending and the suspension of the debt limit.

In an interview before the deal was announced, House Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows told [MSNBC's Morning Joe](#) (2/7), "I'm afraid that the deal that they're going to announce, Chuck Schumer will be very happy about that, the Freedom Caucus members won't later today because we're going to grow the size of government some 13 percent."

Rep. Mark Sanford said on [CNN's The Lead](#) (2/7) that "the likes of Mark Meadows or Jim Jordan and others will be pushing on this point of saying, wait a minute. We have a profound spending problem and if at the end of the day Republicans own the tab on the way it has increased, I think it is a political problem as well."

[Roll Call \(DC\)](#) (2/7, Williams) says that with conservatives "expected to reject the proposal...Democratic support will be necessary for it to advance." [The Hill](#) (2/7, Bolton) says that with Ryan "likely to face defections from conservatives," the "more Republican votes he loses, the more leverage Pelosi has."

Carl Hulse writes in an analysis for the [New York Times](#) (2/7) that while McConnell and Schumer "could barely look at each other on the floor as Congress careened into a government shutdown" two weeks ago, they have "delivered a major budget deal containing eye-popping spending increases and clear political benefits for both sides." While "some conservatives in the House and Senate will no doubt oppose it, and Democrats unhappy that immigration policy was left out," the deal "was drawing broad support from other factions, including Republicans on the Armed Services Committees in the House and Senate, Mr. Ryan, the Pentagon and the White House."

Trump Praises Deal, Calls On Lawmakers To Support It. Meanwhile, [The Hill](#) (2/7, Fabian) reports that the White House "cheered" the deal. Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters, "We applaud the steps forward that they've made." However, she "stopped short of saying President Trump would sign the agreement," saying he would "need to see what's in the final bill." [Politico](#) (2/7, Lima) reports that Trump "praised" the deal in a tweet, writing, "The Budget Agreement today is so important for our great Military," the president tweeted. "It ends the dangerous sequester and gives [Defense] Secretary [Jim] Mattis what he needs to keep America Great. Republicans and Democrats must support our troops and support this Bill!"

On [ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/7, story 4, 3:05, Muir), Jonathan Karl pointed out that on Tuesday, Trump "emphatically called for a government shutdown if he didn't get" money for the border wall, but "from the White House today, an apparent about-face. The President now endorsing the Senate deal that makes no promise whatsoever about the wall."

Byron York said on [Fox News' Special Report](#) (2/7) that "there is no DACA in it. Donald Trump sees that as a victory and a lot of Democrats on the leftist base see that as a loss because they have given up leverage once more and by the way, it has a debt ceiling clause which is going to get the debt ceiling past November so nobody can use the debt ceiling for leverage. This is just a win for the White House."

Mattis Lauds Spending Deal. The [Washington Times](#) (2/7, Miller) reports that Defense Secretary Mattis "heralded" the deal, "saying the military needs long-term funding to keep America safe." Mattis "said the deal to raise spending caps would ensure the Pentagon's ability to fill key positions with new recruits, maintain warships and modernize the military." Speaking to reporters at the White House, Mattis said, "America can afford survival."

Thornberry: Military Is A "Political Football" In Budget Negotiations. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Rep. Mac Thornberry said on [Fox News' Fox & Friends](#) (2/7), "Our situation now is nearly everybody agrees we need to do better by the military, but you have got some Republicans who say, I will vote for more military spending, if you cut other spending because I'm worried about the deficit. You have Democrats who say, I will support the military if you increase other spending. So the military is in the middle as a political football, and meanwhile we are unfortunately losing more and more service members in training accidents because planes can't fly, ships can't sail. They're not getting training they need. It has got to stop."

Trump Calls Newly Released FBI Text Messages "Bombshells."

Senate Homeland Security Chairman Ron Johnson released [384 pages](#) of text messages between FBI lawyer Lisa Page and senior FBI agent Peter Strzok on Wednesday morning, leading President Trump to [tweet](#), "NEW FBI TEXTS ARE BOMBSHELLS!" The President did not elaborate, nor return to the subject in subsequent tweets.

The [New York Post](#) (2/7, Moore) reports, "The messages between FBI lawyer Lisa Page and her lover and bureau colleague Peter Strzok were released early Wednesday by the Senate Homeland Security Committee, which provides oversight of the bureau." The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, Zapotosky, Demirjian) reports, "Though many of the messages already had been made public, President Trump quickly seized on their release, writing on Twitter, 'NEW FBI TEXTS ARE BOMBSHELLS!'" The Post says the texts "show the two officials disliked Trump and feared what he might do as president," but that they "also seemed to harbor animosity for many other politicians, including Democrats, and even co-workers." [Politico](#) (2/7, Lima) headlines its report "Trump, Without Elaborating, Calls FBI Texts 'Bombshells!'"

Page Texted That Obama "Wants To Know Everything We Are Doing." [USA Today](#) (2/7, Johnson) reports that the messages "suggest that President Obama was tracking developments in the bureau's inquiry into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server while she was secretary of State." Page wrote to Strzok, "POTUS wants to know everything we are doing." It is "not clear how Page knew of Obama's purported interest or what, if any, information on the case was shared" with him. Obama's office offered "no immediate response." The [Washington Times](#) (2/7, Mordock) reports that "the new batch of texts now raise questions about Mr. Obama's involvement in the Clinton investigation."

However, [The Hill](#) (2/7, Fabian) reports that those texts "were sent three days before Obama was scheduled to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G-20 summit in China, meaning that the messages could have been about the Russia investigation and not the Clinton probe." Rebecca Ballhaus of the Wall Street Journal [tweeted](#), "Those texts Trump called "BOMBSHELLS" earlier today showed FBI employees prepping to brief Obama about Russia's interference in the 2016 election – not, as Sen. Johnson suggested, Obama meddling in the Clinton investigation."

[Breitbart](#) (2/7, Boyle) reports that Republican National Committee spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany told Breitbart News Daily, "Every day it becomes more and more troubling and more people from the Obama era get tied up into this. Today is our first indication that perhaps President Obama himself was involved in this." National Journal's Josh Kraushaar [tweeted](#), "I don't think this is any kind of bombshell but would love to see more reporting on Obama's role during this time period."

Page, Strzok Traded Texts Praising Comey. The [AP](#) (2/7, Tucker) reports that on the day in July 2016 that then-FBI Director James Comey "defended to Congress the bureau's decision" in the Clinton email probe, Page and Strzok "traded admiring texts about his verbal dexterity – and mocking jibes at the lawmakers questioning him." Strzok wrote of Comey, "God he is SO good." Page responded, "I know. Brilliant public speaker. And brilliant distillation of fact."

Grassley-Graham Criminal Referral: FBI Relied "Heavily" On Dossier For Page FISA Warrant. [The Hill](#) (2/7, Easley) reports that a January criminal referral to the Justice Department authored by Senate Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley and Sen. Lindsey Graham states that "the FBI relied 'heavily' on a controversial dossier compiled by former British intelligence officer

Christopher Steele to obtain a warrant to spy on" Trump campaign adviser Carter Page. The referral "was released late Tuesday night with redactions." The [Washington Free Beacon](#) (2/7, Crabtree) reports that the referral says that the FBI presented Steele "as a credible source" even after suspending its own relationship with him.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal was asked on [CNN's Situation Room](#) (2/7) about the criminal referral. Blumenthal said, "I am deeply disappointed that this first action of criminal referral is one done without any consultation, let alone corroboration, with Democratic members. It smacks of a political action, not a serious legal one. And remember, very importantly here: Christopher Steele went to the FBI voluntarily because he was so alarmed by the prospect of collusion between the Russians and the Trump campaign. Contrast that conduct with Donald Trump Jr., who was told that the Russians had dirt on Hillary Clinton from hacked, stolen emails. What was his reaction? I love it."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/7) says in an editorial that the referral makes text from the FBI's Page FISA warrant application public for the first time, rebutting a Democratic claim that the FBI told the FISA court about the partisan nature of the dossier Steele compiled. The Journal says that it also indicates that Steele received at least some information from the State Department, which raises further questions. Mollie Hemingway of [The Federalist](#) (2/7) argues that the referral "reveals a host of problems arising from the bureau's cooperation" with Steele, "who was working on behalf of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign." The [Washington Times](#) (2/7, Scarborough) also reports on the criminal referral.

Nunes Says He Has Considered Approaching Chief Justice To Testify. [The Hill](#) (2/7, Williams) reports that House Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes "has weighed whether it would be possible to bring Chief Justice John Roberts to 'testify' before Congress as part of his investigation into political malfeasance" at the DOJ. He told radio host Hugh Hewitt, "This is something that we have, like I said, we have thought a lot about this. And the answer is we don't know the correct way to proceed because of the separation of powers issue."

Poll: GOP Voters Increasingly Skeptical Of Russia Probe. [Politico](#) (2/7, Shepard) reported that a pair of Politico/Morning Consult polls of just under 2,000 voters, taken separately on Feb. 1-4 and Feb. 3-4, shows that GOP "voters are skeptical of the investigation into Russia's intervention in the 2016 election and any connection to President Donald Trump's campaign." However, "the House GOP memo Trump says 'totally vindicates' him hasn't been the game-changer for which the president and his allies may have been hoping," as about 30 percent of those surveyed "say they think the contents of the memo...are 'mostly true,' and 22 percent think the contents are mostly false. Nearly half, 48 percent, don't know or have no opinion." Meanwhile, Morning Consult's Kyle Dropp is quoted as saying, "Republican skepticism has grown around the Russia probe and special counsel Robert Mueller. Only 22 percent of Republicans have a favorable opinion of Robert Mueller, and just 25 percent say the investigation has been handled fairly."

Whitehouse: FBI, DOJ Are "Targets Of Dirty Tricks." In a [Washington Post](#) (2/7) op-ed, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse writes that as "recent actions" by Trump and Nunes "underscore, there is a concerted effort to undermine" Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. The FBI and DOJ "have become targets of dirty tricks. The unfair charges are gutter politics: trashing American institutions to protect a president from the due course of the law."

Schiff: Bannon And Lewandowski Refusing To Appear Before House Intelligence Committee. [Politico](#) (2/7, Cheney) reports that House Intelligence Committee ranking member Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) said Wednesday that Steve Bannon "is refusing to testify about his time on the post-election transition team" and in the White House, and that former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski "also indicated through an attorney that he won't make a second appearance before the committee." Schiff said, "Neither Bannon nor Lewandowski have articulated legitimate grounds for refusing to appear and answer questions before Congress, and we fully expect them to return."

Gates Attorneys Ask To Leave Case. The [Washington Post](#) (2/6, Hsu) reports that attorneys for Paul Manafort's co-defendant, Rick Gates, have asked US District Judge Amy Berman Jackson to leave the case, but she did not immediately rule on their request. The exit of attorneys Walter Mack, Annemarie McAvoy, and Shanlon Wu could leave Gates "with his third set of defense lawyers" since he and Manafort were indicted in late October.

Papadopoulos' Fiance Says "Coffee Boy" Gibe Led Her To Speak Out. The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, Rosenberg) interviews Simona Mangiante, the fiancee of former Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos, writing that she decided to speak out after a Trump campaign adviser "said on television that Papadopoulos was nothing more than 'the coffee boy.'" Mangiante said, "I don't represent George. I always talk on my behalf. ... The intention is to deliver a more realistic picture of who George is, which has been distorted in media before."

Travel Ban Defender Boente Signed Page FISA Warrant Application. The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, Zapotosky) profiles "veteran federal prosecutor" Dana Boente, who one year ago "stepped in to defend President Trump's travel ban after the acting attorney general was fired over her refusal

to do so," seeming "to earn Trump's gratitude." Last week it was revealed that Boente "had signed [the] secret court application to surveil" Page.

DOJ Official With Role In Both Clinton And Russia Probes Steps Down. The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, Nakashima) reports that David Laufman, who helped oversee both the Clinton email probe and the Russian interference investigation, stepped down as head of the Justice Department National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section this week, citing "personal reasons."

Publication Of Comey Memoir Pushed Up To April 17. The [AP](#) (2/7) reports in a brief item that Flatiron Books said Wednesday that is moving up publication of Comey's memoir "A Higher Loyalty" from May 1 to April 17, "noting that the FBI is 'under intense scrutiny.'"

Official Says Russia Successfully Compromised Several States' Voting Registration Systems.

On [NBC Nightly News](#) (2/7, story 4, 3:30, Guthrie), Cynthia McFadden reported that a "senior intelligence official...says several states had their voting registration systems successfully compromised by the Russian government. This after US officials had previously revealed 21 states were targeted." Former DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson: "We were able to determine the scanning and probing of voter registration databases was coming from the Russian government." Johnson said he worries it will happen again because "a lot of states have done little to nothing to actually harden their cyber security." McFadden added that with nine months until midterm elections, "DHS is offering cyber security help, but some states tell us they're still waiting."

Tillerson Warns About Russian Interference In Midterms. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/7, story 6, 0:15, Muir) reported in a 15-second brief that Secretary of State Tillerson is "warning that Russia is already trying to influence the midterm elections, and that the US is ill equipped to stop them. In an interview, Tillerson saying the US must continue to make it clear that if they do not stop, they will 'invite consequences.'" [USA Today](#) (2/7, Stanglin) reports, "Without elaborating, Tillerson raised the alarm about new Russian meddling" in the Fox News interview. Tillerson said, "If it's their intention to interfere, they are going to find ways to do that. We can take steps, but this is something that, once they decide they are going to do it, it's very difficult to pre-empt it."

78% Of Russians See US Interference In Their Politics; 69% Of Americans See Russian Interference Here. The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, Taylor) reports that while "a majority of Americans believe the Russian government tries to influence domestic US politics...an even larger majority of Russians believe that Washington is trying to influence their politics. Seventy-eight percent of Russians polled said the United States meddles 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' in Russian politics," compared to 69% of Americans who say the same about Russian interference. The data come from the Chicago Council of Global Affairs and Russia's Levada Center.

Federal Budget Deficit Hit \$174 Billion For First Four Months Of Fiscal Year.

The [Washington Examiner](#) (2/7, Lawler) reports that the Congressional Budget Office said Wednesday that the federal deficit "hit \$174 billion for the first four months" of Fiscal Year 2018, "up \$16 billion from the same period a year ago. The deficit grew because spending grew 5 percent, while revenues increased 4 percent."

Pruitt: Warming Climate Not "Necessarily A Bad Thing."

The [Washington Post](#) (2/7, Grandoni, Dennis, Mooney) reports that during a Tuesday interview with a Las Vegas television station, EPA Administrator Pruitt, who "has repeatedly questioned the scientific consensus that rising levels of carbon dioxide from human-fueled activity are warming the planet," argued that "even if climate change is occurring...a warmer atmosphere might not be so awful for humans." Pruitt said, "We know humans have most flourished during times of what, warming trends. So I think there's assumptions made that because the climate is warming, that that necessarily is a bad thing."

Editorial Wrap-Up

New York Times.

"Trump Wants A Big Parade. It Would Be A Big Mistake." A [New York Times](#) (2/7) editorial says the US "has the world's most capable fighting force. But do we really want to spike the ball at a time when the country is embroiled in two wars, with no end in sight? The president seems to think so." The Times argues that "what Americans and the world need from Mr. Trump is not martial pageantry, but a demonstration that he understands that national strength relies on much more than military power."

"Trump's Backward View Of Immigration." A [New York Times](#) (2/7) editorial says Congress "now appears likely to reach a budget deal to keep the government functioning without treating"

Dreamers "as bargaining chips." It also appears, though, that President Trump will "consider undoing his threat of deportation for these young 'Dreamers' only if Congress considers the first deep cuts to legal immigration since the 1920s." The Times says the changes the President is demanding "stem from a nativist, zero-sum view that what's good for immigrants is bad for America. That view runs counter not just to the best of American tradition and principles, but to evidence of what's best for the country."

"Banquer Namazi Shouldn't Have To Die In An Iranian Prison." A [New York Times](#) (2/7) editorial says the detentions of Americans in Iran "have worsened tensions," and argues that granting Banquer Namazi "a short-term medical leave and then extending it seemed like one possible way to break the logjam." President Trump and his State Department, it says, "should continue trying to engage Iran. It's not in the interest of either country for Mr. Namazi, or any other political prisoner, to die in jail."

Washington Post.

"McConnell And Schumer Celebrate A Budget Deal That Denies Reality." A [Washington Post](#) (2/7) editorial says that while the spending agreement announced by Senate leaders would "do some good," and the lawmakers "deserve credit for talking to one another and dealing in good faith," it comes "at the cost of more debt, confirming yet again that the only time Washington's leaders appear able to shake hands on big deals is when both sides agree to run up the national tab."

"Merkel Has Her Government But What Happens Next Is Crucial." The [Washington Post](#) (2/7) editorializes that the agreement reached between Germany's two big centrist parties "is both good news and grounds for worry." Although the coalition would help the continuation of Merkel's defense of liberal values "in the age of President Trump" and make Germany "more amenable to proposals for strengthening EU institutions and the euro," the weakening of the two parties that forced them into the deal "underlines the growing strength of the political extremes and raises the specter that in Germany, as in other Western nations, the center ultimately may not hold." Germany's far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AfD), is opposing the deal, and even if voters approve the coalition, AfD "could be the leading beneficiary" if the coalition falters.

"An Open-Government Official Was Denied Reappointment. DC Should Say Why." The [Washington Post](#) (2/7) editorializes that the DC Board of Ethics and Government Accountability's decision "not to reappoint Traci L. Hughes as director of the Office of Open Government" is questionable. The Post opines that Mayor Muriel Bowser "should show her commitment to open government by calling on the independent ethics board to" explain the reasons for the decision to the public. The publication asserts that the board "should live up to its title and provide the public with" those reasons. Finally, the Post asserts that "Ms. Hughes should waive any confidentiality protections that might bar public discussion of her situation."

Wall Street Journal.

"More Doubts About Mr. Steele." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/7) says in an editorial that the January criminal referral to the Justice Department authored by Senate Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley and Sen. Lindsey Graham makes text from the FBI's Carter Page FISA warrant application public for the first time, rebutting a Democratic claim that the FBI told the FISA court about the partisan nature of the dossier Christopher Steele compiled. The Journal says that it also indicates that Steele received at least some information from the State Department, which raises further questions.

"The Guns And Butter Budget." In an editorial, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/7) laments that to secure a much-needed funding increase for the military, Republicans had to agree to Democrats demands for large increases in discretionary spending.

"Trump's Moment Of British Truth." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/7) editorializes that President Trump's criticism of Britain's National Health Service was warranted because of its annual winter crises. The Journal also criticizes the NHS for allowing lengthy emergency-room waiting times, as well as breast and prostate cancer five-year survival rates that are inferior to the rates in the US. The Journal concludes that British healthcare needs reformation as the UK population continues to age and the life spans of its citizens lengthen.

Big Picture

Headlines From Today's Front Pages.

Wall Street Journal:
[Congressional Leaders Reach Budget Deal](#)

[A Warning Sign Behind The Market Swings](#)
[Vice Just Had A Big Revenue Miss, And Investors Are Getting Antsy](#)
[How YouTube Drives People To The Internet's Darkest Corners](#)

New York Times:

[Senate Leaders Reach Deal To Raise Spending Over Two Years](#)
[Angela Merkel Strikes New Deal With Old Partners, At A High Cost](#)
[At 11th Hour, Status Of Russian Olympians Remains Uncertain](#)
[Rob Porter, White House Aide, Resigns After Accusations Of Abuse](#)

Washington Post:

[How Mattis Succeeds In Turbulent White House](#)
[Trump Aide To Exit After Ex-Wives Allege Abuse](#)
[Decoding The Redwoods](#)
[Congress Set For Vote On Budget To Avert A Shutdown](#)
[Pelosi Makes Marathon Plea To Help 'Dreamers'](#)

Financial Times:

[Zuma's Exit Appears Closer As He Meets Rival](#)
[Germany's Parties Reach Grand Coalition Deal](#)
[North Korean Leader's Sister To Attend Winter Olympics Opening](#)
[SpaceX Success Lifts Pentagon Hopes Of Ending Launch Pad Monopoly](#)

Washington Times:

[Newly Released Texts Raise Questions About Obama's Role In Clinton Probe](#)
[FBI Put Misplaced Trust In Trump Dossier Author, Misled Judge](#)
[Incendiary Rhetoric Boosts Cory Booker In 2020 Democrats' Race To Far Left](#)
[Congress Busts Budget With Bipartisan Spending Deal](#)
[IRS Overpaid Nearly \\$3.5 Billion In Obamacare Tax Credits In 2017, Can't Recoup Money](#)
[Latin America Wary Of U.S. Harder Line Against Venezuela](#)

Story Lineup From Last Night's Network News:

ABC: Severe Weather; Weather Forecast; White House Aide Resignation; Immigration Deal; Trump-Military Parade; Russia-US Elections Interference; Florida Highway Shooting; Taiwan Earthquake; Vegas Shooting Investigation; Illinois Missing Mother; NFL Player-Home Break-In; Netflix Email Scam; Gerber Baby; SpaceX Rocket.
CBS: Immigration Deal; White House Aide Resignation; Winter Olympics-North Korea; Trump-Military Parade; Severe Weather; Steve Wynn Resignation; Uber-Google Lawsuit; SpaceX Rocket; Taiwan Earthquake; Old Skeleton DNA; In-Home Healthcare; Song Writer; Gerber Baby; Young Pianist-Coding.
NBC: White House Aide Resignation; Immigration Deal; Trump-Military Parade; Russia-US Elections Interference; Winter Olympics-North Korea; Flu Epidemic; Severe Weather; Smart-TV Warning; Steve Wynn Resignation; Taiwan Earthquake; Dunkin Donuts; Gerber Baby.

Network TV At A Glance:

White House Aide Resignation – 8 minutes, 5 seconds
Immigration Deal – 6 minutes, 35 seconds
Trump-Military Parade – 6 minutes, 10 seconds
Severe Weather – 4 minutes, 10 seconds
Taiwan Earthquake – 50 seconds

Story Lineup From This Morning's Radio News Broadcasts:

ABC: Immigration Deal; White House Aide Resignation; VP-East Asia Tour; Winter Olympics; Texas-Police Shot.
CBS: Immigration Deal; White House Aide Resignation; FBI Text Messages; E-Cig Health Risk; NCAA News; Wall Street News.
FOX: Immigration Deal; White House Aide Resignation.
NPR: Immigration Deal; Trump-Military Parade; Turkey-Kurdish Conflict; Wall Street News.

Washington Schedule

Today's Events In Washington.

White House:

PRESIDENT TRUMP — Participates in a bilateral meeting with the President of Guatemala; delivers remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast; meets with Secretary of Defense James Mattis; has lunch with Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin; meets with Dr. Henry Kissinger.

VICE PRESIDENT PENCE — Participates in a briefing on the mission of Yokota Air Base and its joint efforts with Japan; participates in a tour of Yokota Air Base's command center; delivers remarks to troops; participates in a bilateral meeting with President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea; participates in a guestbook signing; has dinner with President Moon Jae-in.

US Senate: 10:00 AM Senate HELP Committee hearing on the opioid crisis – Hearing on 'The Opioid Crisis: Impact on Children and Families', with testimony from 525 Foundation co-founder Becky Savage; Vanderbilt University Medical Center Division of Neonatology Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy Stephen Patrick; and Casey Family Programs President and CEO Dr William Bell Location: Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rm 430, Washington, DC
<http://help.senate.gov/>

10:00 AM Senate Energy Committee oversight hearing on infrastructure – Oversight hearing on 'Energy Infrastructure', with testimony from McKinstry Executive Vice President David Allen; Large Public Power Council President John Di Stasio; Baker Institute Fellow in Energy and Resource Economics Dr Kenneth Medlock; Itron CEO Phillip Mezey; Edison Electric Institute Executive Vice President for Business Operations Group & Regulatory Affairs Philip Moeller; and Interstate Natural Gas Association of America President and CEO Donald Santa Location: Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rm 366, Washington, DC www.energy.senate.gov

10:30 AM Senate Judiciary Committee Executive Business Meeting – Executive Business Meeting, with agenda including consideration of nominations including Kurt Engelhardt to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit; Michael Brennan to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit; Barry Ashe to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana; Howard Nielson Jr. to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Utah; James Sweeney II to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana; Susan Paradise Baxter to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Pennsylvania; Daniel Desmond Domenico to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Colorado; Adam Klein to be Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board Chairman; John Anderson to be U.S. Attorney for the District of New Mexico; Brandon Fremin to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana; and Brandon Fremin to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, plus 'S.1917 Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2017' Location: Rm 226, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC [http://judiciary.senate.gov/](http://judiciary.senate.gov)

10:30 AM Senate Armed Services Committee nominations hearing – Nominations hearing considers Paul Ney Jr. to be Department of Defense General Counsel; Kevin Fahey to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition; Thomas Ayres to be Department of the Air Force General Counsel; and Lisa Gordon-Hagerty to be Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security Location: Hart Senate Office Building, Rm 216, Washington, DC [http://armed-services.senate.gov/](http://armed-services.senate.gov)

11:00 AM Senate Banking Committee votes on Fed governor nominee – Executive Session, with agenda including consideration of nominations of Dr Marvin Goodfriend to be a Federal Reserve System Board of Governors member; Jelena McWilliams to be a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Board of Directors member; and Thomas Workman to be a Financial Stability Oversight Council member, plus the subcommittee organization for the 2nd Session of the 115th Congress Location: Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rm 538, Washington, DC
<http://banking.senate.gov/>

2:00 PM Closed Briefing: Intelligence Matters Location: Rm 219, Hart Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://intelligence.senate.gov>

Deadline for new funding deal to avert federal govt shutdown, after short shutdown last month – Funding for the federal govt due to expire, unless extended, following adoption of the House Amendment to the Senate Amendment with Further Amendment to 'H.R. 195' – a short-term continuing resolution, providing a two-and-a-half-week extension in funding – through both chambers of Congress on 22 Jan, although not until after a three-day partial shutdown of the federal govt followed a failure to meet a 19 Jan deadline. The bill featured a six-year extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program, but not any action on the expiring Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, although with Senate Republicans agreeing to Democratic demands to hold debate on the DACA issue * Earlier this week, the House of Representatives passed another short-term extension, to fund govt through 23 Mar and to extend funding for the Department of Defense through the end of the fiscal year, although it was expected to face amendment in the Senate amid opposition from both parties Location: TBD
<https://twitter.com/WhiteHouse>

US House: 2018 House Democratic Caucus Issues Conference – 2018 House Democratic Caucus Issues Conference. This year's theme is 'United For A Better Tomorrow', with discussion on the economy, education, health care, immigration, and economic challenges faced by women and working families. Former Vice President Joe Biden keynotes today, with other speakers throughout the Conference including former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York

Preet Bharara, former Attorney General Eric Holder, former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe, actor Aasif Mandvi, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Caucus Chairman Joe Crowley, Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez, Topeka, KS, Mayor Michelle De La Isla, and Hoboken, NJ, Mayor Ravi Bhalla * Opening press conference features Reps. Pelosi and Crowley, Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, Assistant Minority Leader Jim Clyburn, Caucus Vice Chair Linda Sanchez, and Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (2:00 PM EST) * Relocated from Cambridge, MD, to the U.S. Capitol at the last minute due to legislative business Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC <http://www.dems.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseDemocrats>

Deadline for new funding deal to avert federal govt shutdown, after short shutdown last month – Funding for the federal govt due to expire, unless extended, following adoption of the House Amendment to the Senate Amendment with Further Amendment to ‘H.R. 195’ – a short-term continuing resolution, providing a two-and-a-half-week extension in funding – through both chambers of Congress on 22 Jan, although not until after a three-day partial shutdown of the federal govt followed a failure to meet a 19 Jan deadline. The bill featured a six-year extension of the Children’s Health Insurance Program, but not any action on the expiring Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, although with Senate Republicans agreeing to Democratic demands to hold debate on the DACA issue * Earlier this week, the House of Representatives passed another short-term extension, to fund govt through 23 Mar and to extend funding for the Department of Defense through the end of the fiscal year, although it was expected to face amendment in the Senate amid opposition from both parties Location: TBD
<https://twitter.com/WhiteHouse>

House meets for legislative business, in a change of plan caused by the looming shutdown – House of Representatives meets for legislative business * Previously, no votes were scheduled in the chamber today, coinciding with the ongoing Democratic retreat, but the current measure funding federal govt expires at the end of today and a new agreement is needed Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC <http://www.house.gov/>

Other: 9:00 AM British politicians visit Washington, DC, as part of ongoing inquiry into fake news. – UK politicians visit Washington, DC, to question social media and tech companies on what they are doing to tackle disinformation as part of an ongoing inquiry into fake news Location: George Washington University, 2100 Foxhall Rd NW, Washington, DC

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/> <https://twitter.com/CommonsCMS>

1:30 PM DNC Vice Chair Meng participates in a press call on the Trump administration’s immigration policies – Democratic National Committee Vice Chair Grace Meng, Washington State Sen. Manka Dhingra, and attorney Parthiv Patel discuss immigration policies and inaction from the Trump administration, and the impacts on Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) families, via press call Location: TBD <http://www.democrats.org/> <https://twitter.com/TheDemocrats>

6:00 PM Washington Diplomat Ambassador Insider series event with Belize Ambassador to the U.S. Amb. Daniel Gutierrez Location: 1310 U St, NW, Washington, DC
<http://www.washdiplomat.com/> <https://twitter.com/diplomatnews>

Last Laughs

Late Night Political Humor.

Jimmy Kimmel: “Have you seen President Trump’s hair flapping in the wind? If you haven’t, you’re in for a treat. … Trump is getting onto the Air Force One, heading into Mar-a-Lago for the weekend, and his hair tried to fly off without him. Now the red hats make sense. … According to White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders, the President’s hair stood still, and he doesn’t have a bald spot, and anything to the contrary is fake news.”

Jimmy Kimmel: “There’s new reports that Donald Trump still wants to meet with Special Counsel Robert Mueller even though his lawyers are strongly advising him not to. They want assurances that Mueller’s team won’t try to entrap the President by doing sneaky things like asking him questions.”

Stephen Colbert: “Now, we know Mueller wants to interview President Trump, but Trump’s lawyers are desperate to avoid that because Trump could put himself in legal jeopardy through what legal scholars refer to as ‘talking.’”

James Corden: “Let’s get into the news. As you know, the government almost shut down today. The stock market has been volatile. They still have to deal on immigration. So of course, President Trump wants to throw a parade.”

James Corden: "A recent article says that President Trump is obsessed with getting the Pentagon to throw a grand military-style parade in Washington DC, complete with tanks and missiles. Yeah, because nobody loves a parade more than a clown."

Trevor Noah: "America doesn't need a big parade to convince the world it has a military. Trust me, the world knows America has a military. It's in their countries right now. We don't need one. If you really want a parade, just like, every time there's a drone strike, just fly another drone right behind it playing marching music."

Trevor Noah: "You know it's bad when even Fox News thinks this is a waste of money. They're like, 'You can't spend that how much a parade. You need save it for sexual harassment settlements. Come on!'"

Jimmy Fallon: "Apparently, President Trump wants to hold a big military parade in Washington. Yep, it would have tanks, airplanes, and soldiers marching, and at the end of the parade, Trump would be like, 'Wait, where's Santa?'"

Jimmy Fallon: "The Trump Administration is thinking about adding work requirements and raising rent for people living in public housing. Americans are like, 'Great, let's start with the White House.'"

Seth Meyers: "According to CNN, President Trump still wants to talk to Special Counsel Robert Mueller despite his lawyers advising him not to. With one source saying Trump thinks he can work this. Oh, yes, please try to work it with Robert Mueller. I think Trump would have a better chance on 'Jeopardy.'"

Seth Meyers: "According to the Washington Post, at President Trump's request, Pentagon officials have started planning a grand military parade for later this year. What a great way to show the world that if you mess with us, we will screw up our own traffic."

Seth Meyers: "Lawmakers have started speaking out against President Trump's proposed military parade through Washington, with Sen. Dick Durbin calling it a fantastic waste of money to amuse the President. Which, by the way, was the original title of 'Fox & Friends.'"

Seth Meyers: [Referring to the inauguration crowd] "And if you are worried a tank won't fit on Pennsylvania Avenue, don't worry. If it is anything like Trump's last parade, there will be plenty of room."

Jordan Klepper: "Trump is a go-getter. You see? He sees things he likes. He goes and then he gets them. He sees the presidency, he gets it. He sees a military parade in France, he gets it. He sees a woman he hasn't married, he gets it. He sees an onion ring on his pillow case, he gets it."

Samantha Bee: "The Washington Post reported this morning that the President was left alone with the memo for several hours so he could read it. Left alone with the memo? For several hours? Then I assume he paid that memo \$130,000, and no one but Donald and the memo will ever know what happened in that room."

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